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COVID-19 Q&A for Schools
Updated: March 3/21/2020, 7:30 a.m.

This document has been updated as follows:
- Changes to: Q-5, Q-7, Q-13
- Added: Q-17 (a) to Credit Requirements section and Q-23 (a) to Miscellaneous
- Added: Two new sections – Technology and Financial/Employment

Instructional Hours Requirements
Q-1: In the event of an extended school closure due to COVID-19, will schools be required to meet the instructional hours requirement of SDCL 13-26-1?

A-1: Per state law, schools are required to meet a certain threshold of instructional time each year. The state requirements are:

- Kindergarten: 437.5 hours
- Grades 1-5: 875 Hours (exclusive of intermissions)
- Grades 6-12: 962.5 (exclusive of intermissions)

If a school is closed for an extended period of time, it should make every effort to adjust the school calendar to make up for missed time. This can be done in several ways; for example, extending the school year, lengthening some school days, and/or providing school on Saturdays. Changes in the school calendar would be recorded in Infinite Campus (as they already are).

If a school can continue to meet the learning needs of students through flex learning efforts during an extended closure and wants these efforts to count towards the minimum hour requirements of SDCL 13-26-1, the school should submit documentation to the Department of Education's Office of Accreditation. The "Notification: Plan to Instruct during School Closure" form is available at https://doe.sd.gov/coronavirus under the "Forms" link.

In the instance that a school is closed for an extended period of time and is not be able to meet the minimum requirements set out in SDCL 13-26-1, the Department of Education will consider these unique circumstances as it reviews school calendars for SY 2019-20. When being considered for re-accreditation, the department will consider a waiver to instructional time as long as the district or school seeking re-accreditation made every effort to meet SDCL 13-26-1's requirements.

Q-2: My school will be providing flex learning and wants the time to count towards the minimum hours requirements. I need help filling out the chart on the "Notification: Plan to Instruct during School Closure" form.

A-2: The brief example (below) would be the total hours the district is notifying the department that it provided flex-learning. The reason is also a sample of what could be listed.

Name of School	Grade Span Number of Hours			Dates	Reason
	K	1-5	6-12		
Big Yellow Ball Elementary	40 hrs. = 10 days X 4 hours	60 hrs. = 10 days X 6 hours		March 16 – 27, 2020	School closed for deep cleaning. Instruction provided during the days closed.
Brown Ball Middle and High School			60 hrs. = 10 days X 6 hours	March 16 – 27, 2020	School closed for deep cleaning. Instruction provided during the days closed.

Q-3: If my school does not provide any instruction such as flex learning during extended school closure, how do I adjust our calendars in Infinite Campus to account for this time?

A-3: If your schools were closed and no instruction was occurring during this time, you should add this time to the end of the calendar. To appropriately mark this time in Infinite Campus, your Infinite Campus Administrator will need to create a code within the Attribute Dictionary for COVID-19. Please use C19 as your code and COVID-19 as the name. The state has set up this code in the State Edition of Infinite Campus, but for it to sync correctly to the state, you must use the same code and the same name. These fields must match what the state has set up. See screen prints below.

Q-4: Do I need to adjust the school calendar if the school is closed but students are doing some form of flex learning?

A-4: No. The calendar shall remain as is reflecting days of instruction. Superintendents were instructed to fill out the form on the DOE website. https://doe.sd.gov/coronavirus/documents/NotificationPlantoInstruct.doc

Assessment

Q-5: In light of school closures statewide, will schools be required to administer state assessments?

A-5: The South Dakota Department of Education submitted and was *informally* approved for a waiver of statewide assessment, accountability, and school identification requirements for the 2019-20 school year. Through this waiver, schools do not need to administer statewide assessments to students.

Since federal waivers do not impact state law, the department is looking into options related to state testing for homeschool students. The department encourages districts to reach out to homeschool parents and communicate that the testing requirements **may** be waived due to the disruption caused by COVID-19. If parents still want to pick up testing packets and administer the state-provided assessment, they may do so. The department will communicate with districts any changes to homeschool testing requirements as soon as possible.

Q-6: Assuming schools are back in session and state testing proceeds, will individual students who are quarantined due to positive identification of COVID-19 be required to complete the state assessments?

A-6: If a student is quarantined due to the student or family member testing positive for COVID-19 and does not return to school during the state testing window, then the school will need to complete the medical exemption form.

If the student can return to school and the state testing window is still open, then the school must administer the state assessments.

Accountability

Q-7: What will DOE be doing for the annual accountability process?

A-7: The South Dakota Department of Education submitted and was *informally* approved for a waiver of statewide assessment, accountability, and school identification requirements for the 2019-20 school year. Through this waiver, schools do not need to administer statewide assessments to students this year. This, in turn, impacts certain provisions of the accountability and process. For example, there will be no new identification of schools for Comprehensive and Targeted Support. Schools currently identified in these categories will continue to receive supports in SY 2020-21.

Special Education

Q-8: Are school districts required to continue to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities during a school closure caused by a COVID-19 outbreak?

A-8: If a school district closes schools to slow or stop the spread of COVID-19, and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then it would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Once school resumes, the district must make every effort to provide special education and related services to the child in accordance with the child's individualized education program (IEP) or, for students entitled to FAPE under Section 504, consistent with a plan developed to meet the requirements of Section 504.

If a school district continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student population during a school closure, the school must ensure, that students with disabilities have

equal access to the same opportunities. To the greatest extent possible, the district must ensure that each student with a disability be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP developed under IDEA, or a plan developed under Section 504. (34 CFR §§ 300.101 and 300.201 (IDEA), and 34 CFR § 104.33 (Section 504)).

Q-9: How should school districts prepare and provide special education services if flex learning opportunities are being implemented?

A-9: When considering flex learning opportunities for students with special needs, districts should prioritize health and safety of students, staff and communities. Districts need to be flexible and consider employing a variety of delivery options. There is no defined or correct delivery method that will equitably meet the needs of all students. Districts should identify and acknowledge service delivery limitations and discuss how to implement a student's IEP plan to allow the student to meaningfully participate and progress in the general curriculum.

Districts should be communicating with parents prior to, during, and after a school closure regarding their child's IEP services. District leaders should identify communication methods to ensure there are opportunities for parents' questions and concerns to be addressed in a timely manner.

Q-10: What if the district is not able to identify and provide an appropriate flex learning opportunity for a student with disabilities?

A-10: Some districts may be in a position to continue teaching using distance learning methods; however, equity is a critical consideration. It is important to note that if educational services are being delivered to students in any form, in order for the district to remain open, those services must be provided to all students, including students who don't have access to technology at home, and students receiving special education services.

After an extended closure and/or flex learning opportunity, districts are responsible for reviewing how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students eligible for these services. Districts should plan to hold IEP team meetings when school resumes to address student-specific needs resulting from the closure and flex learning time. This might include discussions of compensatory education and/or extended school year (ESY) services made on a case-by-case basis.

Q-11: What should a district do about SPED timelines during closure and extended social distancing?

A-11: Districts should consider ways to use distance technology (e.g., Zoom, conference calls, Microsoft Teams, Signal) to the extent possible to provide child find, hold initial and annual IEP meetings, and/or evaluation/eligibility meetings, if staff and parents are available but not able to attend in person. Continuing to complete IEP and evaluation/eligibility meetings will help decrease the workload when school resumes. If staff and/or parents are not available or believe their participation is impacted by the lack of an in-person meeting, districts should document the reason and complete the activity in a timely manner following the ending of school closures.

Q-12: If a student is at high risk and needs to remain in quarantine, how should the district proceed with the provision of special education and IEP documentation?

A-12: If the exclusion is a temporary emergency measure (generally 10 consecutive school days or fewer), the provision of services such as instructional telephone calls, homework packets, internet-based lessons and other available distance-based learning approaches is not considered a change in placement.

For long-term exclusions, a district must consider the continuum of alternative placements and make a determination of placement. A change in placement must be made by the IEP team. If the team determines that the child's needs could be met through homebound instruction, then the district must amend the IEP and issue a prior written notice.

Flex Learning or Alternate Delivery Options

Q-13: What resources are available to support teachers in delivering flex-learning options to students?

A-13: The South Dakota Department of Education has gathered a list of resources by content area to support educators who may need to access additional resources to support flex learning while schools are closed due to COVID-19. The department is not endorsing any of the listed resources nor has the department thoroughly vetted them for alignment to content standards. Schools and teachers should review the resources carefully to determine if they are appropriate. Educators can access the resources via this Google doc.

The K-12 Data Center has services and platforms available for schools to assist with flex learning efforts. Please see the "Technology" section of this document.

In addition, TIE has gathered and organized a variety of resources to support the transition to online learning. The website is: https://sites.google.com/tiegapps.net/onlinelearning/

As additional resources are identified, DOE will share those via listservs and other means.

Q-14: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are currently suggesting limiting mass gatherings. How does that guidance interact with teachers coming into a school building to prepare flex learning packets for delivery to students?

A-14: Use common sense and consider the health and safety of staff. Have you completed the deep cleaning of the facility? Are teachers working in small groups throughout the facility (eg., three 3rd grade teachers collaborating in one classroom)? Are the teachers healthy and not in a high-risk group for the virus? Read the most recent guidance for mass gatherings and events on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website or find the link on our website at https://doe.sd.gov/coronavirus, and take common sense measures to mitigate risk.

Meeting Credit Requirements

Q-15: What will the impact of prolonged school closure be on graduation requirements, including at the district, state, NCAA levels?

A-15: Whether a student has met sufficient time in any given course-mastered standards is a local decision. Diplomas are awarded at the district level, and it is up to each school district to set the requirements for course time and diplomas, within the parameters set out by the state in instructional hours and graduation requirements (Unit of Credit Links: ARSD 24:43:01:01 (53), Waivers: Unit of Credit; Graduation Requirements Link: 2018 High School Graduation Requirements).

Q-16: How can a school keep students on track with coursework that is designed to be hands-on, such as welding or construction courses, that cannot be replicated at home?

A-16: Career and technical education (CTE) standards are designed to be flexible in their implementation. How courses are put together and how the standards are met, including the mix of standards in each class, is a local decision. Understanding that students will lose hands-on learning time in the CTE classroom, consider flexible learning strategies that help students stay on track while school is closed and students cannot participate in activities such as welding, constructions, etc. Many education providers are also offering online resources for educators and students that may work for your teachers. Ultimately, whether a student has met sufficient time in the course and standards to have earned credit for a course is a local decision.

Q-17: How can students who are enrolled in Capstone Experience courses that normally have a worksite component meet course requirements this semester, in particular at worksites that are now closed to outside individuals?

A-17: The standards in Capstone Experience courses are designed with flexibility to encompass a wide range of activities and learning strategies. The standards do not require a set amount of time in a workplace or a specific means of meeting the standards. Consider flexible learning options, including virtual providers and working with remote technology with community members (i.e., phone calls, video conference/chat, etc.), to allow students to meet work-based learning standards. Ultimately, how a student meets standards and the extent of the standards met in order to earn credit for a course is a local decision.

Q-17 (a): How should schools send out transcripts to meet scholarship and entrance requirement needs for students during the closure?

A-17 (a): How a school transmits student transcripts is a local decision. Schools should ensure that student information is sent via a secure mechanism. If your school lacks the ability to send encrypted emails, ask the requestor by what means you can send transcripts securely. If a signed, official copy is not required, students have the option to print their own transcripts from Infinite Campus.

Please note that there are two transcript options in Infinite Campus – an official Board of Regents transcript and, if your school has chosen this option, a district-designed transcript. You can continue to release the BOR transcript, as noted in the screenshot below.
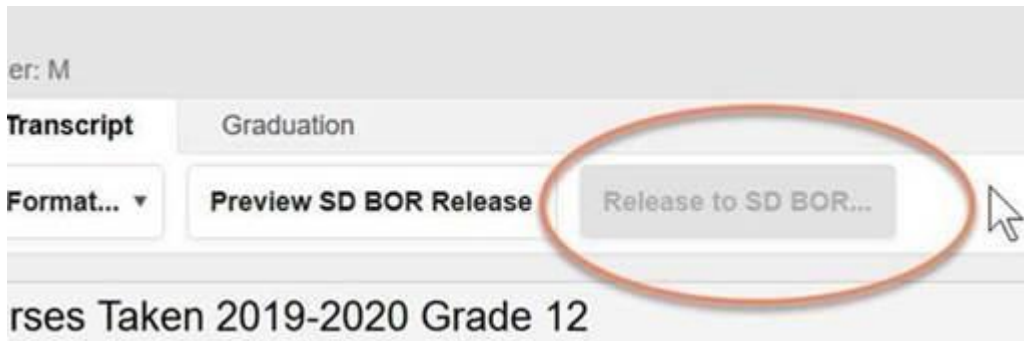
Meals for Students

Q-18: Our school is interested in continuing food service programs. What is the process?

A-18: South Dakota has received several waivers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture providing flexibility for school food service programs. This will allow for certain school food services to continue during this time of unexpected school closures. For detailed information about this process, please visit https://doe.sd.gov/coronavirus/foodservice.aspx and look for "Announcements Regarding Coronavirus/COVID-19." You can also call our Child and Adult Nutrition Services Office at (605) 773-3413, leave a message, and someone will return your call.

Q-19: If approved to continue food service during time of unexpected school closure, how should we serve the meals?

A-19: Meals do not need to be served in a group setting, like typical school cafeteria meal service. Meals may be served to encourage "social distancing." Some examples include:

- o "Grab and Go" -- A child may come to the feeding site to pick up a meal that is not immediately eaten at the site.
- o "Drive Thru"-- A family may drive up to a feeding site with their children to pick up a meal. The family drives away to eat the meal somewhere else.
- o Meals delivered to low income neighborhoods for pick-up by families. A school food authority or sponsor agency can drive meals to an area for distribution to eligible children. The children take the meals away from the distribution site to eat elsewhere.
- o Meals delivered on normal bus routes for families to pick up.

Q-20: How should my Seamless Summer Option (SSO) closed enrolled site keep a meal count of only my district's enrolled student meals?

A-20: Many schools are using a printed list of student names or using their normal point of service system. Please keep in mind that you are trying to prevent people from passing sickness along. If using a PIN, how are you disinfecting between students or can an adult enter the PIN for the student?

Q-21: What should I enter into my point of sale computer system to get the free meals entered?

A-21: Please work with your software vendor to temporarily allow free meals for all students. If your software vendor is unable to do this in your system, you may need to work with your business official to determine an acceptable method to keep these meal counts on file for audits and program reviews.

Q-22: What numbers do I submit for meal reimbursement for breakfast and lunch? Can I submit an estimate or the number of meals I prepare?

A-22: No, your claim can only include reimbursable meals served to eligible children. Just like in normal school operations, you cannot claim an estimate, or the number of meals prepared, but not served.

Miscellaneous
Q-23: How can students receive access to school counselors?

A-23: If your school district chooses to provide virtual school counseling services, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has guidance and resources available.

- Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During an Emergency Shutdown
- ASCA Update: COVID-19 (Virtual counseling resources and ethics)
- COVID-19 Resources (Suggestions and resources for providing support to students)

Q-23 (a): When providing virtual services during COVID-19 extended school closure, are there flexibilities to HIPAA laws?

A-23 (a): If you have a staff person or contractor who operates as a covered health provider for purposes of HIPPA and who has been providing student health-related services, the Office of Civil Rights for the Department of Health and Human Services has issued guidance for use of telehealth technologies.

https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/notification-enforcement-discretion-telehealth/index.html

This guidance includes a list of preferred vendors and a list of those public facing communications that are not allowed.

For a list of who qualifies as a covered health provider, use this link:
https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/hipaa-ftc-act/index.html

Q-24: We have Hutterite Colony schools in my district that do not allow internet access. What should instruction look like for these students?

A-24: Just as schools are finding ways to facilitate instruction with their other buildings, it is important that instruction continues for Hutterite Colony students as well. Work closely with Colony leaders to determine the best course of action for your locality.

Q-25: What if my school re-opens and a parent chooses not to send their student because of concerns about coronavirus (eg., close family member is at high-risk for COVID)?

A-25: State law requires any person in control of a child of compulsory school age to ensure that the child attends school regularly. (SDCL 13-27-11). The school should ask the family for an excuse from the appropriate medical professional, or they may seek an exemption certificate from public school instruction.

Q-26: Will the deadline for Workforce Education Grants be extended?

A-26: Yes. We are extending the deadline until 10am Central on April 3, 2020. Please contact Kara Schweitzer at kara.schweitzer@state.sd.us with any questions.

Technology

Q-27: What services are available through the K-12 Data Center to assist my school with flex learning delivery?

A-27: Below is a list of services available to South Dakota schools through the K-12 Data Center at Dakota State University.

Google Apps: Google Classroom is available to all K-12 users with Google Apps enabled. A series of Getting Started docs for teachers is available in FAQ 1401. Google has enabled advanced features for Hangouts through July 1, 2020. With these features, users can record meetings, include up to 250 users per call, and livestream meetings for up to 100,000 domain users.

Office 365: Microsoft Teams Classes can be created by users with Microsoft Teams enabled. A series of Getting Started docs for teachers is available in FAQ 1402. Teams and Skype can also be used for remote meetings and desktop sharing.

Media Storage: Media files can be stored in Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, and Microsoft Stream. More information is available in FAQ 1388.

Q-28: Where can my technology staff get assistance with their questions regarding the services above, as well as other tech-related concerns?

A-28: Staff of the K-12 Data Center are available to answer questions. Please create a support ticket or email help@k12.sd.us. Below are links to several specific FAQs.

For Google Apps
- Use [FAQ 1188](#) to manage services

Note: If Google Apps is enabled for users, Google Classroom is automatically enabled.

For Office 365
- Use [FAQ 1176](#) to set defaults for new users
- Use [FAQ 1375](#) to enable or disable services in bulk

Note: Enabling Microsoft Teams gives users access to create teams. To limit this access for students, see [FAQ 1386](#).

Financial/Employment

Q-29: Can school districts use their federal funds to compensate employees during school closures?

A-29: While we do <u>not</u> have clear guidance from the federal level at this time (3/21/2020), our understanding is that if a state, district or other recipient of federal funds has a policy of paying employees during a closure, it should follow that policy for its federally funded staff as well. In other words, a school district may use its federal funds (from U.S. Department of Education) to pay its federally funded staff during a closure, if it uses state or local funds to pay state and locally funded staff during the closure. For example, if state funds will pay state-funded staff during a closure, then Title I funds can pay Title I-funded staff, Title II funds can pay Title II-funded staff, IDEA funds can pay IDEA-funded staff, etc. This approach would be similar to guidance issued during the H1N1 situation in 2009.